

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

Selected Speeches and News Releases

April 25 - May 1, 1991

IN THIS ISSUE:

News Releases—

Water Outlook Still Bleak for Most of West

USDA Warns Pet-Bird Buyers: Newcastle Disease Again A Threat

USDA Seeks Comment on Proposed Increase in Pork Assessment Rate

USDA Proposes Fees for Classing 1991 Cotton Crop

USDA Amends Its Import Regulations to Protect Cattle from BSE

USDA Announces Support Level, by Type, for 1991 Crop Peanuts

USDA Increases Fees for Egg, Poultry, Rabbit and Egg Products
Grading

USDA Announces Grain, Rice Storage and Handling Rates

USDA Announces Commodity Credit Corporation Price Support Program
Provisions

Pasta-Like Weed and Insect Killer Developed by USDA Scientists

Madigan Names Members to National Dairy Board

Forest Service Invites Comment on NEPA Procedures

USDA Proposes Fee Increase for Seed Inspection and Certification

Continued on inside front cover.

News Releases Continued.

Meeting on Rabies Vaccine Field Trial Slated for May 17 in Pennsylvania

CCC Interest Rate for May Lowered to 6-1/4 Percent

Comment Sought on Proposal for Cotton Importers to Vote in Cotton Referendums

USDA Announces Conference on Regulation of Biotechnology

News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

WATER OUTLOOK STILL BLEAK FOR MOST OF WEST

WASHINGTON, April 25—Water supply conditions for many Western states, although improved over last month, remain below-to-well-below average, according to the latest report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service.

"Many Western states received above-to-well-above average precipitation totals during March, but forecasts continue to call for below-to-well-below average spring and summer streamflows for most of the West," said SCS Chief William Richards.

Runoff volumes of less than 70 percent of average are expected in California, Nevada, most of Oregon and Utah, southern Idaho, central Montana, eastern and southwestern Wyoming, and northwestern Colorado.

Spring and summer streamflows greater than 110 percent of average are forecast for Alaska, British Columbia, northern Washington, northwestern Montana, east-central Arizona, south-central Colorado, and most of New Mexico.

Reservoir storage remains below-to-well-below average for most states. At 14 percent of average, Nevada is still showing the lowest storage total in the West. States reporting above-average reservoir storage are Arizona, (116 percent), Colorado (128 percent), New Mexico (188 percent), and Washington (126 percent).

Western states depend on snowmelt for about 75 percent of their water supply. SCS and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service jointly analyze snow and precipitation data to forecast seasonal runoff in the West. The state-by-state outlook:

ALASKA—Heavy snowcover increased substantially during March. Several major storms during the month added 250 to 400 percent of the average monthly snowfall. Only the northern and southern coasts of Alaska have below average snow.

ARIZONA—Extremely high streamflows during March substantially increased storage in the larger reservoirs of central Arizona and filled or partially filled many smaller reservoirs and stock ponds throughout the

state. Forecasts call for above-average runoff to continue during April and May. March precipitation was above average in all areas of Arizona.

CALIFORNIA—Despite near-record March precipitation, storage levels and expected runoff are still generally well below levels needed to furnish average water supplies in 1991. Several March storms produced 300 to 400 percent of the average monthly precipitation in central and southern California. The northern third of the state received 200 to 300 percent of its average March precipitation. Streamflow volumes statewide now stand at 30 percent of average, up from 15 percent of average last month. Spring runoff volumes are expected to average 65 percent of average statewide. Reservoir storage increased from 48 to 60 percent of average.

COLORADO—Snowpack percentages increased substantially across the state. These wet conditions will bring badly needed improvements to the summer water supplies in many river basins. Although conditions have improved, water conservation measures remain important since most of Colorado can expect below-normal runoff this year.

IDAHO—The water supply outlook still remains critically low for many basins. Streamflow forecasts call for near-average conditions in northern Idaho, 28-to-64 percent of average in central Idaho, and 65-to-86 percent of average in the Upper Snake Basin in eastern Idaho and western Wyoming.

MONTANA—March mountain precipitation was near-to-above average over most of the state. The heaviest amounts fell over southwest, central and south-central Montana. Spring and summer streamflows are expected to be below-to-well-below average across much of the state. Streams in the northwest and north-central areas are forecast to be near or above average.

NEVADA—Water supply conditions have improved significantly in most basins of the Great Basin of Nevada and California from one month ago. However, water supply conditions remain well-below average and severe drought conditions continue. Seven major reservoirs average 9 percent of capacity and 14 percent of average. Streamflows in all basins are expected to be well below average for their forecast periods.

NEW MEXICO—Snowfall during March was heavy and widespread across the state, increasing the snowpack from 94 percent of average on March 1 to 127 percent of average on April 1. Streamflow forecasts range from 93 percent of average in the northwest to 278 percent of average in the southwest. Near-to-much-above-average irrigation water supplies from snowmelt runoff are forecast for this spring.

OREGON—Drought conditions can be expected in many areas of the southern counties this spring and summer. Water shortages can be expected throughout the rest of Oregon. March precipitation was very heavy throughout most of Oregon, ranging from 103 percent to 177 percent of average. Streamflow forecasts increased 5-to-30 percent from the previous month, and now range from 32-to-89 percent of average. Reservoir storage is 57 percent of average.

UTAH—Below-normal temperatures and near-to-much-above normal mountain precipitation increased the snowpack to more than 200 percent of normal for March in some areas. Streamflow forecasts have improved slightly, but still remain much-below normal. Reservoir storage continues to be very low, at less than 50 percent of average.

WASHINGTON—Precipitation was 113 percent of normal statewide, and varied from 140 percent of average in the Walla Walla Basin to 68 percent in the Olympic Basin. April 1 reservoir storage was generally good throughout the state, with reservoirs in the Yakima Basin at 126 percent of average and 88 percent of capacity. March streamflows varied from 232 percent of normal on the Similkameen River to 51 percent on the Snake River.

WYOMING—Streamflow prospects for many Wyoming water users brightened during the month as a result of above-average snowfall in the high elevations of many drainages. However, most drainages will have spring and summer flows that are below average during the runoff season. Reservoir storage in the northwest, and along the Wind River drainage is near-to-above average. Elsewhere in Wyoming, storage is below average.

Ted Kupelian (202) 447-5776

#

USDA WARNS PET-BIRD BUYERS: NEWCASTLE DISEASE AGAIN A THREAT

WASHINGTON, April 25—Prompted by two new outbreaks of exotic Newcastle disease—a deadly viral infection of poultry and pet birds—the U.S. Department of Agriculture today warned buyers of exotic birds to be sure birds they purchase meet federal requirements for quarantine and disease testing.

“On April 20, we confirmed the presence of exotic Newcastle disease in southern California after 60 yellownape parrots died,” said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. “The week before, a yellownape parrot in Nevada that was purchased near Spring Valley, Calif., was confirmed to have died of this highly contagious disease.”

USDA and state animal health officials are attempting to locate the vendors of the infected parrots to learn if the birds came into contact with other birds or poultry.

Glosser said buyers should make certain the birds they purchase are wearing the circular stainless steel USDA-approved leg band. The band is engraved with three letters and three numbers, and indicates the bird has met federal import requirements for quarantine and testing.

Exotic birds may enter the country legally from many countries if accompanied by appropriate permits. The birds are required to be held for a minimum 30-day quarantine at one of six APHIS-operated facilities or a privately owned, APHIS-supervised, facility. APHIS tests the birds during quarantine to make certain they are free of communicable poultry diseases before they are released.

“The best policy to avoid financial loss and risk to other bird owners and the poultry industry is to buy pet birds only from known, reputable dealers,” Glosser said. “If a bird seems to be a bargain, the buyer should suspect smuggling.”

Glosser said hundreds of birds are smuggled into the country annually, and that these smuggled birds often carry exotic communicable diseases.

“Nearly every year we are called on to investigate and contain outbreaks involving pet birds that have entered this country illegally,” he said. “Fortunately, none of these outbreaks have invaded poultry farms since an outbreak in 1971.”

That outbreak, which spread to California poultry farms from imported pet birds, cost poultry producers \$56 million in production losses before its eradication in 1974.

The commercial poultry industry in the United States employs 150,000 people and generates annual retail sales of \$26 billion.

Glosser urged travelers, pet dealers and hobbyists to obtain a free pamphlet and fact sheet on the strict rules governing bird imports and how to avoid the purchase of smuggled birds. Write to "Pet Bird Pamphlet," USDA-APHIS, Room 613, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Margaret Webb (301) 436-7799

#

USDA SEEKS COMMENT ON PROPOSED INCREASE IN PORK ASSESSMENT RATE

WASHINGTON, April 26—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking comments on a proposal to raise the rate for assessing hogs and imported pork to increase funding for the national pork research and promotion program.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the increase—one tenth of one percent—was proposed by the National Pork Producers Delegate Body, the group of pork producers which initiates actions affecting the program. The assessments are levied on the market value of live hogs when sold domestically or imported—and on imported pork and pork products.

The proponent claims the increase would add about \$10 million to \$12 million dollars annually to the pork program's \$30-million budget, allowing the program to keep pace with inflation and fund projects for advancing the position of pork in the marketplace, Haley said.

The pork program is authorized by the 1985 Pork Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act, which is implemented by the 1986 Pork Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Order.

If adopted, the increase would be the first since the initial one-quarter of one-percent assessment rate established in 1986. The new assessment would be an amendment to the order.

Notice of the proposal will appear as a proposed rule in the April 29 Federal Register. Comments, in duplicate and postmarked or courier-dated no later than May 29, should be sent to the Marketing Programs

Branch, Livestock and Seed Division, AMS, USDA, rm. 2624-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. Copies of the Federal Register notice and additional information are available from that office, telephone (202) 382-1115.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

#

USDA PROPOSES FEES FOR CLASSING 1991 COTTON CROP

WASHINGTON, April 26—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing that fees charged cotton producers for manual and high volume instrument (HVI) classification of cotton remain the same as in 1990, and that fees for standards and testing services be raised.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the anticipated increase in volume of cotton to be classed this coming year is expected to offset projected increases in costs that would normally cause the classing fee to be raised.

Under the proposal, the fees would remain \$1.23 per bale for manual classing and \$1.73 per bale for HVI classing.

Also to remain unchanged is the five-cents-per-bale discount offered to producer-agents who voluntarily provide centralized billing and collection services, Haley said.

Classing fees are set by a formula stipulated in the Uniform Cotton Classing Fees Act of 1987. Elements of the formula are estimated crop size, the rate of inflation and the operating reserve fund of AMS's Cotton Division.

USDA proposes certain other cotton service fee increases such as fiber and processing testing and costs of practical forms of cotton standards. These increases are necessary because of higher costs for rent, utilities and mandated salary increases. The Uniform Cotton Classing Act of 1987 does not cover these services, and the fees imposed must reflect the full cost to AMS of providing the service.

The proposed fee schedule will be published as a proposed rule in the April 30 Federal Register. Comments, postmarked no later than May 15,

should be sent to Ronald H. Read, Cotton Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2641-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. Copies of the Federal Register notice are available from that office, telephone (202) 447-2145.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

#

USDA AMENDS ITS IMPORT REGULATIONS TO PROTECT CATTLE FROM BSE

WASHINGTON, April 29—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is amending its import regulations by adding rules to protect U.S. cattle from an exotic disease, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

“Under the new provisions, beef and venison can be imported if the country of origin certifies that the source animal did not display signs of a neurological disorder and the animal was born after the country banned the use of cattle feed containing meat and meat byproducts,” said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Meat that qualifies for importation also must be deboned, and lymph and nerve tissue removed. Bovine serum can be imported only for research and scientific purposes under special permission from APHIS. Bone meal, blood meal and offal are banned under the regulations.

“We are taking these actions because scientists believe BSE can be transmitted to cattle through feeding bone meal and other products derived from infected animal carcasses,” Glosser said. “The extra handling of approved meat is needed because the BSE agent concentrates in nerve and lymphatic tissue and bone marrow.”

The new regulations apply only to countries where BSE has been reported: Great Britain (including Northern Ireland), the Republic of Ireland, Oman and Switzerland. The regulations are being added to existing rules intended to keep out other exotic diseases and comply with sanitation requirements for meat imported into the United States.

BSE is a fatal degenerative disease of the nervous system, which was not known to exist anywhere in the world until 1986.

Sick cattle may display changes in temperament, abnormal posture, incoordination and loss of body weight despite continued appetite. There

is no test to detect the disease in a live animal, no vaccine and no cure. All infected animals eventually die of the disease.

BSE mainly infects cattle although a few deer also have been stricken. There is no scientific evidence to indicate BSE is a human health hazard. The disease is not known to exist in the United States.

The causative agent of BSE has not been clearly established. Scientists currently believe that it may be a slow virus, a virino or a prion. The agent may be the same or similar to the one implicated in scrapie, a fatal, degenerative neurological disease of sheep and goats.

The BSE regulations are being published in the April 30 Federal Register as an interim rule and will be effective on that date. Comments will be accepted if they are received on or before June 1. An original and three copies of written comments referring to docket 90-252 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development; PPD, APHIS, USDA; Room 866 Federal Building; 6505 Belcrest Road; Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Comments may be inspected as soon as received at USDA, Rm. 1141-S, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Larry Mark (202) 447-3977

#

USDA ANNOUNCES SUPPORT LEVEL, BY TYPE, FOR 1991 CROP PEANUTS

WASHINGTON, April 26—The average support levels by type, quality and location for the 1991 peanut crop were announced today by Keith Bjerke, administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

The figures are based on national price support levels of \$642.79 per short ton for quota peanuts and \$149.75 per short ton for additional peanuts.

The quota support level by type for an average grade ton of 1991 crop peanuts will be:

- \$638.14 for Virginia-type peanuts;
- \$647.60 for runner-type peanuts;
- \$601.37 for Spanish-type peanuts;
- \$638.14 for Valencia-type peanuts from the Southwest which are

suitable for cleaning and roasting; and
—\$601.37 for other Valencias.

The method of computing the price support levels for 1991 crop peanuts and the grades within the types is the same used for the 1990 crop.

For each percent of sound mature kernels in a ton, including sound split kernels, the support level will be:

- Virginia-type peanuts, \$9.402;
- runner-type peanuts, \$9.218;
- Spanish-type peanuts, \$9.172;
- Valencia-type peanuts in the Southwest suitable for cleaning and roasting, \$9.565; and
- other Valencias, \$9.172.

The loan value for additional peanuts will be 23.30 percent of the applicable quota rate. This factor represents the ratio of the \$149.75-per-short-ton national support level for 1991 crop additional peanuts to the \$642.79-per-short-ton national support level for 1991 crop quota peanuts.

As with the 1990 crop, the price support rate for 1991 crop peanuts on which a growth regulator was used will be discounted by 100 percent from the price support rate that otherwise would be applicable.

The actual price support level for an individual lot of peanuts will depend on the percent of the various sizes of kernels in each ton of peanuts and other factors.

Robert Feist (202) 447-6789

#

USDA INCREASES FEES FOR EGG, POULTRY, RABBIT AND EGG PRODUCTS GRADING

WASHINGTON, April 26—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will increase fees for certain grading and inspection services for eggs, poultry, rabbits, and egg products, effective May 1.

“Increases in the salaries and fringe benefits of federal employees and of federally licensed state employees providing the services justify raising the fees,” said Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service, which administers the grading program.

Hourly fees for voluntary, industry-requested grading will rise from \$19.68 to \$20.96 for resident service (work of a grader with a regular

tour of duty at a plant); from \$27.28 to \$28.64 for non-resident service (intermittent, “as needed,” grading); and from \$27.36 to \$29.68 for nonresident grading work on weekends and holidays.

The administrative fee for the cost of USDA supervision of voluntary grading and for other overhead expenses will rise from \$.029 to \$.031 per case of shell eggs and from \$.00029 to \$.00031 per pound of poultry in plants using the resident grading program.

The minimum administrative fee for poultry and eggs per billing period will rise from \$145 to \$155, and the maximum fee will rise from \$1,450 to \$1,550. The minimum administrative fee for grading rabbits will rise from \$145 to \$155 per billing period.

Hourly fees for special inspection services in egg products plants also will rise. Increases are from \$14.72 to \$16.04 for holiday inspection work and from \$23.20 to \$24.48 for processing appeals from inspectors’ decisions.

The Egg Products Inspection Act requires that costs of services other than basic inspection during a normal 40-hour week be paid by the user. The special inspection fees were last increased in May 1990.

Grading services administered by USDA are available on request and are paid for by the users. The Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 requires user fees to be reasonable and, as nearly as possible, equal to the cost of the services. Current fees have been in effect since May 1990.

The grading and inspection fee increases will be published as a final rule in the April 29 Federal Register. Copies are available from Janice L. Lockard, Chief, Standardization Branch, Poultry Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 3944-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456, telephone (202) 447-3506.

Carolyn Coutts (202) 447-8998

#

USDA ANNOUNCES GRAIN, RICE STORAGE AND HANDLING RATES

WASHINGTON, April 26—The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today the criteria to be used in accepting storage and handling rates offered by warehousemen operating under the Uniform Grain Storage Agreement or the Uniform Rice Storage Agreement.

The criteria apply to warehouse contracts entered into during the period June 1, 1991 through March 31, 1992, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Under the offer-acceptance method, warehousemen submit offers for rates at which they will store and handle grain. If a warehouseman offers rates that are considered unacceptable to the CCC, the CCC will reject the rates but will give the warehouseman the opportunity to adjust the rates to an acceptable level.

Most rates offered for the 1991-92 contracting year were lower than those offered for 1990-91 contracts.

“About 75 percent of offers for wheat were the same as or lower than last year, while 90 percent of the offers for corn and other grains were the same as or lower than the previous year. The lower offers reflect the reduction in CCC stocks of grain and competition within the storage industry to store available stocks,” Bjerke said.

Bjerke emphasized that the procedure used for this year's rates applies only to the 1991-92 contract. He also said that CCC will continue to withdraw its grain from higher cost facilities and swap stocks into lower cost warehouses during the coming year.

Bjerke said the maximum storage rate may not exceed 38 cents per bushel per year and the maximum handling rates may not exceed 9-1/2 cents per bushel for receiving charges and 9-1/2 cents per bushel for loadout charges. Rates offered below these maximum rates will be accepted if they satisfy the following specific criteria:

- They do not exceed the warehouseman's current rates;
- They do not exceed the warehouseman's current rates by more than 1 cent per bushel per year for storage and by a total of more than 1/2 cent per bushel per year for handling, or;
- In addition to the maximum rate increase permitted in item 2, they do not exceed the warehouseman's current rates by more than an additional 1 cent per bushel per year for storage and by an additional total of more than 1/2 cent per bushel per year for handling if, during the

1990-1991 contract year, the warehouseman's corresponding storage and handling rates were decreased that much or more.

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206

#

USDA ANNOUNCES COMMODITY CREDIT CORPORATION PRICE SUPPORT PROGRAM PROVISIONS

WASHINGTON, April 26—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced provisions for price support programs for the 1991 and subsequent crops of wheat, feed grains, rice, oilseeds and farm-stored peanuts.

Madigan said the proposals on price support programs published in the March 11 Federal Register are being adopted as final rules, with certain exceptions.

—In order to be eligible for a price support loan, loan deficiency payment or purchase agreement, a producer must maintain “beneficial interest” in the commodity. However, the producer must retain title and risk of loss in the commodity until it is sold or until the Commodity Credit Corporation acquires title to the commodity pledged as collateral for the loan. The final rules specify certain conditions under which a producer may enter into a contract to sell the commodity but still retain price support eligibility.

—The proposal to deduct a non-refundable marketing assessment from the loan proceeds of peanuts pledged as collateral for a farm-stored loan was deleted because an assessment will be made when the peanuts are sold.

—The minimum oil content level for canola, rapeseed and safflower seed eligible for price support is 35 percent. There is no oil content requirement for flaxseed and mustard seed. Quality requirements will be established for sunflower seeds intended to be used primarily for oil and for sunflower seeds whose intended use is primarily for a purpose other than oil.

—In order to be eligible for price support, the maximum moisture levels for oilseeds, other than soybeans, cannot exceed 10 percent for canola, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower seed and sunflower seed and 9 percent for flaxseed.

—Flaxseed and sunflower seed intended to be used for oil must grade

No. 2 or better in order to be eligible for price support.

The final regulations will be published in the Federal Register in the near future.

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206

#

PASTA-LIKE WEED AND INSECT KILLER DEVELOPED BY USDA SCIENTISTS

WASHINGTON—U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists have whipped up their own brand of “pasta” to kill weeds and insects.

Nematodes and fungi, natural pest controls, are wrapped in a dough to act as “an effective biological control of insects and weeds,” said William J. Connick, Jr. research chemist at USDA’s Agricultural Research Service, Southern Regional Research Center in New Orleans.

Connick found that durum wheat flour called semolina, the same flour for pasta, can be used to make granules that entrap nematodes and fungi for application on fields.

This dough provides nutrients for fungi to grow so they can be used as biological controls against weeds, said Connick. Granules holding nematodes easily break down by water or other microorganisms in the soil to release the small worms against insects, he said.

“The nematodes start coming out soon after the granules get wet,” Connick said. “After exposure to moisture and sunlight, the fungus grows and completely covers the granule like a fuzz and releases spores, usually within 24 to 72 hours of application.”

Connick is seeking a patent on the formulation that he’s coined, “Pesta.” If industry licenses the patent, the Environmental Protection Agency requires review of the product for its use with regulated pesticides, which includes fungi.

To make Pesta, wheat flour, clay powder and ingredients that benefit the organisms are blended with a water slurry of either fungi or nematodes, Connick said. The mixture is kneaded so nematodes or fungi are entrapped in the dough. Connick said he rolled the dough into a thin sheet and dried it overnight at room temperature.

“The next day the dry dough is stiff and can be easily ground up,” Connick said. “To get granules of about the same size, we sifted them through sieves.”

Against hemp sesbania, a weed commonly found in soybeans, rice and cotton, Pesta containing the fungus *Colletotrichum truncatum* completely wiped out the weed population within seven days of application in greenhouse tests. Pesta containing other weed-killing fungi was tested against sicklepod and jimsonweed with promising results, Connick said.

Pesta with *Steinernema carpocapsae* nematodes tested against corn rootworm larva resulted in a 63 percent reduction in emergence of adult insects after 21 days from greenhouse application, Connick said.

These products also may be useful for controlling white grubs, sod webworms, the Colorado potato beetle or other insect pests, he said.

“The process is simple and relatively inexpensive,” said Connick. “The process can be carried out at room temperature and it’s not going to expose the people using it or handling the product to dangerous materials.”

All tests were conducted under environmental conditions conducive to activate either the nematodes or fungi in the granules, Connick said.

Connick also is studying ways to improve Pesta’s shelf life. He said when materials that help retain moisture are added to the formulations, nematode survival improves during storage.

“Being based on pasta production, there should be worldwide knowledge on how to make these granules, and equipment should already be available,” Connick said. “In addition, we’re using renewable and biodegradable agricultural materials to make the Pesta products.”

Bruce Kinzel (301) 344-2739

Issued: April 29, 1991

#

MADIGAN NAMES MEMBERS TO NATIONAL DAIRY BOARD

WASHINGTON, April 29—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced the appointment of two new members and ten incumbents to the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board for three-year terms beginning May 1, and ending April 30, 1994.

Newly appointed are James S. Cook, Evergreen, Ala. (region 8) and John A. Peachey, Myakka City, Fla. (region 10).

Reappointed to serve second terms are Steve Hofman, Modesto, Calif. (region 2); Harry A. Papageorge, Ogden, Utah (region 3); James R. Lefebvre, Elk River, Minn. and Ervin M. Silvers, Albany, Minn. (region

5); Frederick E. Anding, Hudson, Wis. and Timothy C. O'Harrow, Oconto Falls, Wis. (region 6); Harold E. Rice, DuQuoin, Ill. (region 7); Harold E. Reiff, Burnettsville, Ind. (region 9); Horace H. Waybright, Gettysburg, Pa. (region 11); and William T. Underwood, Tully, N.Y. (region 12).

The National Dairy Promotion and Research Board, composed of 36 dairy farmers, was established by the Dairy and Tobacco Adjustment Act of 1983 to develop and administer a coordinated program of promotion, research and nutrition education. The board is authorized to design programs to strengthen the dairy industry's position in domestic and foreign markets.

The national program is financed by a mandatory 15-cent per hundredweight assessment on all milk produced in the contiguous 48 states and marketed commercially by dairy farmers.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service monitors the operations of the board.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-8998

#

FOREST SERVICE INVITES COMMENT ON NEPA PROCEDURES

WASHINGTON, April 29—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is inviting the public to comment on the revision of its policy and procedures for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act to include new and expanded direction for conducting environmental analyses and preparing environmental documents.

The National Environmental Policy Act is the basic national charter for protecting the environment.

According to USDA's Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson, "These revisions are needed to address new regulations, case law, and experience gained with existing procedures." Robertson described the revisions as a "fine tuning" of the existing process.

The revisions were published in the Federal Register April 29, opening a public comment period of 60 days.

Comments may be sent to Chief, USDA Forest Service, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090, by June 28.

For further information, contact the Environmental Coordination staff, USDA Forest Service, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090, or phone (202) 447-4708.

Judy Kissinger (202) 447-2494

#

USDA PROPOSES FEE INCREASE FOR SEED INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION

WASHINGTON, April 30—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed increasing fees for the inspection and certification for quality of agricultural and vegetable seed.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service said the increase is necessary to cover the cost of testing seed and issuing Federal Seed Analysis Certificates by the agency's Livestock and Seed Division. Major factors contributing to the change are the increased cost of salaries for federal employees and costs for seed testing supplies and equipment.

The proposal would increase the hourly fee for testing and issuing certificates from \$23.40 per hour to \$29.40. It also would increase the fee for issuing additional certificates requested after the original certificate has been issued, from \$3.30 to \$7.35.

The inspection and certification program is conducted under the Agricultural Marketing Act on a voluntary, fee-for-service basis. Fees equal to operating costs must be collected for the service. The proposal would ensure that the inspection and certification program is self supporting, Haley said.

The proposal will be published in the May 2 Federal Register. Comments, to be received no later than May 31, should be sent to James P. Triplitt, Chief, Seed Regulatory and Testing Branch, Building 506, BARC-E, Beltsville, Md. 20705.

Carolyn Coutts (202) 447-8998

#

MEETING ON RABIES VACCINE FIELD TRIAL SLATED FOR MAY 17 IN PENNSYLVANIA

WASHINGTON, May 1—Plans to conduct a field trial of a genetically engineered rabies vaccine will be discussed during a public meeting sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on May 17 in Harrisburg, Pa.

The meeting will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Pennsylvania Game Commission, State Headquarters Building, 2001 Elmerton Ave.

“The proposed field trial would be held in Sullivan County and extends the testing of a new approach toward controlling rabies in wild raccoons,” said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. “Raccoons are the major source of rabies outbreaks in pets and livestock along the eastern seaboard.”

Individuals who wish to speak should register at the meeting location between 9:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. and should bring two copies of any written statements to be presented.

Those making presentations will be heard in the order of registration. Latecomers can speak after registered persons have finished. The meeting may adjourn early once all speakers have been heard.

Interested persons may mail their written comments (referring to docket 91-049) to: Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development; PPD-APHIS-USDA; Rm. 866 Federal Building; 6505 Belcrest Road; Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Comments must be received by June 1.

To develop the vaccine, scientists extracted a single gene from a rabies virus, Glosser said. The gene, which codes for a harmless coat protein, was then transferred into vaccinia virus, the same virus that was formerly used in smallpox vaccination. The transferred coat protein expressed in the vaccinia virus is intended to make an effective oral rabies vaccine. For the proposed field trial, the vaccine was encapsulated in a bait that is especially attractive to raccoons.

The application to conduct the Pennsylvania trial was submitted by the Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology, Philadelphia, Pa. APHIS officials who reviewed the application examined a wide range of information, including data from a more isolated, preliminary trial of the vaccine being conducted on Parramore Island, located off Virginia’s Atlantic coast. They have now issued a preliminary finding that the trial would have no significant impact on the environment.

The data were also reviewed by an outside panel with expertise in pox virology, rabies virology, wildlife biology, raccoon biology, human medicine, ethics and public policy. Another expert committee, of the National Vaccine Program of the U.S. Public Health Service, also reviewed use of the vaccine. Neither panel found any significant environmental or human hazard.

A copy of the environmental assessment and preliminary finding of no significant impact, plus any comments already received, may be inspected at USDA, Rm. 1141-S, 14th Street and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Amichai Heppner (301) 436-5222

#

CCC INTEREST RATE FOR MAY LOWERED TO 6-1/4 PERCENT

WASHINGTON, May 1—Commodity loans disbursed in May by the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will carry a 6-1/4 percent interest rate, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the CCC.

The 6-1/4 percent interest rate is down from April's 6-3/8 percent and reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U.S. Treasury in May.

Robert Feist (202) 447-6789

#

COMMENT SOUGHT ON PROPOSAL FOR COTTON IMPORTERS TO VOTE IN COTTON REFERENDUMS

WASHINGTON, May 1—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking comment on a proposal to allow cotton importers to vote in referendums under the national cotton research and promotion program.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the 1990 Farm Bill authorized assessment of imported cotton and cotton products. The proceeds would be remitted to the Cotton Board, as in the case of domestic cotton. The assessments would be contingent on the outcome of a referendum in which producers and importers vote on whether to extend the assessments to cotton imports, he

said.

The cotton research and promotion program's rules on referendums currently cover U.S. cotton growers exclusively.

For importers to vote, the rules need to be modified to allow them to do so, Haley said.

Notice of the proposal to allow cotton importers to vote in cotton research and promotion program referendums will appear in the May 3 Federal Register. Comments, postmarked no later than May 17, should be sent to Ronald H. Read, Cotton Division, AMS, USDA, rm. 2641-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090. Copies of the notice are available from that office, tel. (202) 447-2259.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

#

USDA ANNOUNCES CONFERENCE ON REGULATION OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

WASHINGTON, May 1—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will hold the third national conference on federal and state regulation of biotechnology in St. Louis, Mo., July 29-31, on the subject: "Transgenic Plants: Regulatory Path to Commercial Production."

The conference will be at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at Union Station.

The event will begin Monday, July 29, with a preconference tour of the Monsanto Research Laboratories in St. Louis, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. The conference will be held the following two days, beginning at 7:30 a.m. on July 30 and ending at 5 p.m. on July 31. Admittance is free.

"These conferences have established a broad dialogue between federal and state officials on regulatory issues affecting products developed through agricultural biotechnology," said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"During the last four years, APHIS has granted over 115 permits for field tests of transgenic plants. We feel the focus of the St. Louis meeting should be on the relationship between developmental testing and the approval process leading to commercialization of these new plant products," Glosser said.

Six major items are on the meeting agenda:

—The regulatory procedures of several federal agencies will be

reviewed by looking at case studies from APHIS, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration.

—Proprietary protection for transgenic plants will be explored, including plant patents, plant variety protection certificates and utility patents.

—Biological considerations in commercialization will be discussed, including the biology of major crop plants, the outcome of USDA workshops on canola, wheat and corn and advances in viral cross-protection.

—A representative from the European Community will discuss progress made in solving commercialization in Europe, the entry of U.S. products and the status of member state's gene laws.

—International initiatives on food safety and testing at the developmental stage will be explored.

—State regulatory initiatives in the United States will be reviewed, including the impact of state regulations on the commercial development of agricultural products developed through genetic engineering.

In addition, special workshops will be held on how to secure exemptions from APHIS regulations (Code of Federal Regulations, Volume 7, Part 340). These regulations require a permit for introducing organisms and products altered or produced through genetic engineering if the donor, recipient or vector may be a plant pest.

For details on the conference, write Shirley Ingebritsen, USDA, APHIS, BBEP, 847 Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782; or telephone her at (301) 436-7601.

Amichai Heppner (301) 436-5222

#

